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SUBJECT: DART ASSESSMENT OF AL AMARAH

SUMMARY

1. DART Field Team South traveled to the southeastern Iraqi Governorate of Maysan on 7 May to assess security along the main highway from Basrah to Al Amarah and within the city of Al Amarah itself. During the trip, the DART met with Coalition forces based in and around the city. End Summary.

DART SECURITY ASSESSMENT

2. Six DART members, including two translators, traveled along Route 6, the principal highway northward from the southeastern city of Basrah to Al Amarah, a city of approximately 250,000 people. The route is 154 kilometers and consists of a four-lane, divided highway that roughly follows the western bank of the Tigris River.

3. According to the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) and the British non-governmental organization (NGO), Ockenden, large quantities of unexploded ordnance (UXO) are located along the route. During the trip, the DART saw some UXO, marked by rocks, along the sides of the highway. A number of abandoned Iraqi military vehicles were seen along the route.

4. Coalition forces operating in Maysan Governorate report that the local environment is secure and permissive for humanitarian operations. However, they issued the standard caveat against traveling at night. No military escort is required in the immediate area of Al Amarah.

5. There was less fighting in the city than in other areas of southern Iraq because most loyal Baathist Party members fled before the arrival of the Coalition military forces.

POLICE AND PROTECTION

6. According to Coalition forces, security, especially at night, is still the major concern of Al Amarah residents. Coalition forces are trying to address this issue within the constraints of limited personnel. Looting continues to be a problem. Coalition forces are focusing patrols on safeguarding key infrastructure.

7. Coalition forces are also training the local police force in basic criminal investigation duties and teaching them to be more proactive than reactive. The police force is led by the former police chief, a Brigadier who switched sides two days before the regime collapsed in Baghdad. Some members of the local police force continue to wear their old, military-style, uniforms. To deter potential abuse and corruption, Coalition forces believe that more Coalition military police are needed in the city to supervise and train a new Iraqi police force.

8. The courthouse in Al Amarah has been extensively damaged. Virtually all documents were destroyed by either Baath Party leaders prior to their departure or by the looters who followed.

9. There are reports of mass graves in the area but no supporting evidence has been uncovered. No reprisal crimes have been reported. Some local Baath party members are reported under "house arrest."

COALITION QUICK IMPACT PROJECTS

110. Besides working to re-establish a police force, Coalition forces are helping the U.N. World Food Program re-establish the Public Distribution System for food rations and get the local grain elevator and silos working. Coalition forces plan to provide public transportation for teachers and students.

111. To help the local economy, Coalition forces paid an estimated 17,500 civil servants in Al Amarah the equivalent of USD 20 in Iraqi dinars seized from former government accounts in three local banks.

112. The electrical grid provides only intermittent power to Al Amarah, and many citizens rely on generators for their power. However, shops are re-opening, markets are busy and full of produce, repairs are being made to damaged buildings and businesses, and farm workers are harvesting wheat in nearby fields. Children are sweeping the streets and there is a lack of rubbish in some areas not seen elsewhere in southern Iraqi towns.

113. A high council, or the Secretariat, has been formed with local leaders but, according to Coalition forces, it is highly politicized. A second group, the "Regeneration Committee" has been created as a group of technical experts to help re-establish the city's infrastructure.

JONES